

# Close-Fitting Masks Decrease Exposure by About 95%

We have all experienced masks gapping at the side, under the chin, or at the top, as well as the annoying tendency to slide down off our nose.

With new evidence that close-fitting masks can significantly reduce exposure to COVID-19, the CDC is now recommending double masking along with three other options to improve the fit of masks and increase their effectiveness.

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***NOTE: Double masking is not mandatory at this time, but the choice to double mask is supported by Risk Management.***

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## Double Masking

Studies have shown that layering a surgical (or medical procedure) mask with a cloth mask on top decreases exposure to potentially infectious aerosols by about 95%.

Things to remember when double masking:

1. The test was only for double masking using a surgical mask and cloth mask.
2. The surgical mask must be under the cloth mask.
3. **DO NOT** double mask using an N95.
  - N95 are reserved for medical and first responders.
  - Employees should not be using an N95 without being trained on the proper use and fitting of an N95.
  - The seal on a properly worn N95 is sufficient, and adding a cloth mask can reduce the ability to breathe properly.

## Other Ways to Improve Mask Fit & Effectiveness

There are other ways to improve the fit of masks. The graphic below shows the CDC's four options for a better fitting mask.

**Wearing a mask that fits tightly to your face can help limit spread of the virus that causes COVID-19**

In lab tests with dummies, exposure to potentially infectious aerosols decreased by **about 95%** when they both wore tightly fitted masks

Other effective options to improve fit include:

- Cloth mask over medical procedure mask
- Medical procedure mask with knotted ear loops and tucked-in sides
- Mask fitter
- Nylon covering over mask

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### Option 1

**Knotting the ear loops and tucking in the sides of a surgical mask** works just as well. Here is a link to a video that demonstrates how to do this:

[Pro Tip to Help Your Earloop Mask Fit More Tightly - YouTube](#)

### Option 2

**You can also use a mask fitter brace.** This is a piece that fits over your mask and helps it fit more snugly.



Mask Fitter Brace

### Option 3

Finally, you can **add a nylon covering, like a gaiter, over your mask.**

### Additional Information & Resources

For more information, please see the links from the CDC below:

- [Improve How Your Mask Protects You](#)
- [Maximizing Fit for Cloth and Medical Procedure Masks to Improve Performance and Reduce SARS-CoV-2 Transmission and Exposure, 2021](#) *(This article discusses the testing and results.)*